

147 MILLION ORPHANS (MMXI-MML)

Eileen R. Tabios



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Front Cover Image: Cribs for orphaned babies at an orphanage in Colombia (photograph by Eileen R. Tabios)

Back Cover Drawing of Author: "Mom" (2014) by Michael Pollock

gradient books

2014

Finland

147 MILLION ORPHANS
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Eileen R. Tabios

[with the *presence* of

William Allegrezza, Tom Beckett, John Bloomberg-Rissman,

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HAYBUN

A QUINTET FOR MICHAEL GERARD TYSON

SELECTED NOTES TO POEMS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PRE

While no one really knows the number of orphans worldwide, a common estimate is 147 million. These children represent one of the greatest humanitarian tragedies of our time even as their plight fails to receive as much attention as natural disasters or wars.

147 MILLION ORPHANS: MMXI-MML is the first book-length haybun poetry collection. A “haybun” is a combination of hay(na)ku and other text. The hay(na)ku (<http://haynakupoetry.blogspot.com>) is a 21st century diasporic poetic form; its core is a tercet-based stanza with the first line being one word, the second line being two words, and the third line being three words.

For these haybun, the opening hay(na)ku tercet generally served as impetus to the subsequent prose. Each word forming the hay(na)ku tercets is taken from a school project by Eileen R. Tabios’ adopted son, Michael. After arriving in the United States, Michael had been encouraged to learn English in 8th grade partly by learning 25 new words a week.

MMXI

lawsuit

unreasonably quotas

prior abduct script

No. Raising damp lashes, you never raised a trembling hand—

you never asked to be abducted into existence from a god's idea or some gaseous implosion where no planets yet existed. But—

against whom would you file a lawsuit for wearing the same five outfits every week? The same hand-me-downs on 23 female “unnatural twins”—the other commodities in your house. Against whom would you file a lawsuit for a torture's conclusion: a “home” is not a street address? A kind family invited you for a vacation. On your last day together, the mother bought you a dress you'd admired in a window—*how it shimmered beneath its spotlight!*—ruby taffeta, gold sash belting the waist into a generous bow, puffed sleeves edged with tiny quadrilateral mirrors. Against whom would you file a lawsuit for the stunned look on her face when, mere minutes later, you sadly advised she not pack that dress into the history-stained backpack you would take back to your street address? “They take dresses like this,” you explained, fingers lightly touching a plushness alien to your senses, “and put them into a room for special occasions.” Against whom would you file a lawsuit for your whispered betrayal of an enforced secret, “But at the orphanage, there are never any *special occasions*”?

~~Against whom would you file a lawsuit for the bruise you self-inflicted when you raised a knuckle to threaten a drop into remaining interior for the world has never been hospitable to your tears?~~

Against which author, false god, or chemical reaction would you file a lawsuit for the script that determined the beginning steps—

this wabi-sabi base to your life?

MMXII

knucklehead

weekend weekday

reacquaint vessel insubordinate

To learn his new language, the adoptee was charged with learning 25 English words a week during the schoolyear. Each new word spilled from the wet graphite tip of a knife. “Weekend, weekday”—such common terms, such common concepts. To the adoptee, the two words at first were a sifting of gravel for more gravel. Revelation was hard-fought, only to camouflage its rewards too well—comprehending the significance of sun versus moon was another blow from a belt’s brass buckle that refused to remain a lost memory. In an orphanage, time is relevant only if a future is acknowledged. ~~For such acknowledgement, desire must come to transcend selfishness—almost impossible among those owning nothing, especially their fate.~~ For an orphan, the dog’s point of view suffices: the present is all that matters, especially when it lacks the fist, the empty plate, a rotgut bottle’s cap as toy, the alley as bedroom. Or so the orphanage staff believed—

when the boy whose intellect dwarfed his body started hurling rocks through the dim windows of the orphanage, he was not defining “knucklehead.” If a vessel with its hidden hole loses its base, how to *contain, hold, embrace* ... anything in flux like liquids or emotions or identity or the degradation of the word “consequence” into “punishment”? How to trust in the passage of time to offer the possibility of possibilities? That adoption commences a progression will not dilute the pain of how each new word must be gained through bodily cutting as if to live a bad poem’s dictum: to feel is to *hurt*. How to trust that a metaphor need not be a lie? What a knothole—this interior of a fist! This classroom of negative space...!

MMXIII

television

screening insightful

prescient melancholy evasive

If you were a sleeping bird in Madagascar, a certain species of moth might drink your tears through a fearsome proboscis shaped like a harpoon. They'd insert their tools beneath your eyelids. They would drink *avidly*. You were a rapt presence as you met this species through the grainy television screen used to babysit hundreds of orphans. After the television darkened, no genius would be required to explain your prescient conclusion: you will attempt to evade too much in this life, you will fail, *there is no other life*. ~~You, sadly, will come to prefer silk, even polyester, doppelgangers to roses that otherwise would shrivel.~~ Your insights will always arise from the sheen of rain-drenched pavements. For example, that one can weep without the aid of nightmares—that one can weep in the most safe haven, or even the small heavens that still and do manage to pock-mark our mortal planet.

MMXIV

regurgitate

bake jargon

laconic nefarious dainty

She remained grateful, even when the celebrity couple edited the only gift she could give her child: a name. The darkness revealed a stench of copper and dirt—it worsened to form a man. The darkness revealed a dagger. The darkness revealed a hand duct-taping her lips as her body was invaded as if it contained missiles. The darkness lifted to reveal Awasa, a town in southern Ethiopia, seemingly as it was before a night began and ended into someone else's story. She named the consequence, "Yemsrach"—she named the consequence as if the infant was always intended. She named the baby "Good News." She became the gift renamed "Zahara." Her name is Mentwabe Dawit—she will kiss tabloid pictures of Angelina Jolie. Her child who bears the names of two different stories is no longer malnourished. Her child has ceased dying. Her child is now *proactively* living, with laughter no stranger. Her name is Mentwabe Dawit—the daughter of another woman who defied their culture where rape is taboo for *all* participants. Certain details must be named to be plucked out of the silence camouflaged as background to someone else's story. What is the name of the mother who continued to love her daughter after a rape? ~~The mother who counseled her daughter to continue living despite the world they inherited versus chose~~—what is her name? (Someday, Zahara will want to know.) The mother who would not let Mentwabe Dawit's body become a civil war—what is her name!

MMXV

quibble

malignant integrate

limp conceptualize prioritize

To remember a father's fist against a mother's cheek is to integrate the malignant into myocardium. Short-term memory is a temporary activation of neural connections that can store incidents for mere seconds. Short-term memories become long-term through continued recall and associations that change the nerves' physical structure. The adoption therapist is eager for his continued attention. But isn't the adoptee simply protecting his body? Long-term memory bases its existence on biology. The adoption therapist brushes away my parental concern as a quibble. Adoption is an industry, as commercial as the polyethylene commodities traveling on ship tankers from China with no regard for carbon footprints. Yes, one can leave footprints on water. Recall Jesus. And how his father counseled adoption as the camel's key for passing through the needle's eye. I became a mother through ~~someone else's~~ more than one person's loss. I see the rose and feel the thorn. I cannot protect my sons and daughters. But they will *be* sons and daughters: I give them the Word, and the word is the non-harrowing—and even delicious!—“Mom”! I feel the thorn and see the rose: the crown that, when worn, begins a bleeding so lyrical it most assuredly will move the most addicted bees to leave their sodden Queen.

MMXVI

cantaloupe

lynch wild

mob intolerable beliefs

To introduce “ethics” to the Lord of the Flies is to bare one’s back to more than one whip’s flagellation. *Au contraire*, the latest studies show adoptees do not suffer from a lack of self-esteem. He deserves no less than the universe, he still insists long after his bedroom became an alleyway between stacked toys, comics, sports paraphernalia and other items I do not know because they were stolen. Another study reveals that over 91% of adolescents understand the value—the *honor!*—of honesty. But one-third of these sages cheat on school exams. You are explaining this to your adopted son who survived for 16 years what might kill you in 16 hours. You explain that ethics is the most difficult “Life Lesson” to learn because what is good is not synonymous with what gives an advantage. Unexpectedly, he decides to be kind enough not to laugh—his politeness only serves to let loose a whip for another crack. Where flies lay their eggs, manners were debased to source yet other forms of camouflage. You fear the weight of the large knife in your hands as you cut a melon in half. You urge him to eat more so he can grow past years of malnutrition. You eat more of the melon, too, for its savory flesh and its desired coolness against your tongue—only to feel more cracks from the whip: how the melon’s slipperiness reminds that the feral can never be embraced because the feral will not be held. The feral as a bubbling volcano chilling with its undeniable orange heat.

MMXVII

endowed

faith catapulted

perplexed coddle pamper

The one who has never been coddled was informed she would be adopted and she cried out in response, *THANK YOU SO MUCH!* We mothers hate hearing this story—no child should learn to be grateful for an effect of loss. Yes, we can understand why she is grateful. But no child should learn to be grateful for an effect of loss. This is but one example of how perplexity can be the most appropriate reaction. Her new mother told her the family would take her on a vacation. She asked for a camera—perhaps what can unfold will become real for her only when affirmed by photographs, objects she can touch and recover. She's learned at too young an age that memory is fragile and lapses too often to desire. Because my faith has not yet betrayed, I see her easily in my mind's eye: frolicking on what could be a Hollywood movie set of beige sand blue water green mountain a grove of palm trees, looking back frequently at her new Mom to grin, carefully tip-toeing around the delicate sea creatures laid on sand by an ocean calmed from witnessing her eager joy, looking back frequently at me. As I call out, *Be careful. Have fun. Yes, it's all lovely.*

MMXVIII

mortgage

repertoire pantomime

origin Harlequin Judy

Karma sucks. A lot lies behind the new edict: *You are not allowed to use these four words around your family: whatever (cue snotty tone), Stupid!, Shut. Up.* Adoption is like marriage: faith is bestowed upon some mortgage but the honeymoon inevitably betrays. One example: the one who is eager to learn but cannot be taught. So eager ~~to please~~ to retain the remaining shard of identity, she must always interrupt a teacher to exclaim variations of *It's exactly like something else I once learned on my own.* The "on my own" might not be articulated but is implicit. She wore raspberry-colored shorts topped by a camisetta with spaghetti straps—in any other context, her outfit (edged in raspberry lace as well) would be charming. Please observe how a mime's repertoire inevitably bores. Something, after all, made clowns lose their smiles.

MMXIX

basis

puppet polyethylene

Neapolitan beefy entirely

Her beloved's gaze consistently misses 100% reciprocation with her earnest eyes. The puppet is half flesh, half plastic. The challenge is to determine which of the moveable parts would find it impossible to arch: the beefier the belly—*any expert in bioenergetics would tell ya!*—the healthier the mind! He observes the suffering of another child without making a move towards it. Yet if he sees a happy baby he becomes its closest planet. Whatever I have asked of him, I know with as much certainty as befits a psychopath that such task was quite ... *modest*. O my heart feeling the impending stroke—I am trying to avoid saying the obvious to you: my son is afire and I with all the water of the Sierras fauceting through my fingers cannot help him cannot help him cannot help him

MMXX

scenario

unsaturated orchardist

unclothed anecdotist anachronistic

...remains an orphan. Due to silence. She cannot utter the word "Mom." Somewhere, a lily unfurled to reveal a red pistil so passionate a camera can reconfigure it into a lipstick named *Alejandra*. Since the petal forever hides it from possible views, it might as well be named *Wound*. Alejandra remembers her childhood and says adamantly with a moue of her adultly plump lips, "I don't miss it." Yet she cannot articulate a doorway into a future ~~she believes is healthy but which~~ she cannot desire. I understand: the adoptive parent can never be joyful over lessons attained through a child's loss. Damn those lilies and their hidden penises. Damn those lies and the sunlit parallel universes so baldly cancelled. Damn those sterile orchards. Damn those anecdotes that can never satisfy. Damn how silences become solids. Insert the phrase: *STILL TO BE EDITED*. Entonces, damn those second-guessings to no avail, where every gesture is a moment of nakedness. Thus, fragile

MMXXI

unicyclist

administered semblance

nobility allowing hobnobbing

I blog the positive energy but there is darkness without which nature is not authentic. I blog the smiles but not the tears hobnobbing as learning a new language means giving up the illusion of control ~~of course it was an illusion: children are rarely in control~~. I do not blog the copious flow over how the division symbol in the West is the reverse of her birthland's—and mine though I did not weep over reversing that childhood assumption because it had no connection to survival. I always blog my amusement to hide a history of abuse. Such a lovely child—the first time I saw her I saw a future "Miss Universe" and determined then to make sure she'll be shooting goals instead of cheering others. Soccer. Ah, soccer—she loves *futbol*! She always makes the long, corner shot. But when she has to move (to defend herself or to attack), she notes without understanding what she reveals: a ball always missing its target. How to demolish her walls of various semblances without fragmenting her nobility? How to encourage motion with all its attendant risks? Of course I only blog the positive energy and you reply with silence—she is the would-be unicyclist.

MMXXII

cleroy

plague itinerant

coenzyme vagabond harass

Your desire to please me led you to learn my tongue. You did not know to judge the promiscuity of my language—it even insists on poetry after the ~~concentration camps~~ expulsion of 147 million orphans. That there is no Paradise is irrelevant. You focused on the hollow of my neck—the permanence of its perfumed *Welcome!* whenever a shadow harasses your eyes and you need nothing less than maternal embrace. Tell me as many words as you learn ~~even~~ especially the vagabonds: *cleroy*, *schmeroy*...the words themselves do not matter. Poetry is not words, and I gladly coenzyme you in Chanel No. 5 song as we celebrate what your future will not become (even as it foretells that 147 million is merely a square root):
itinerant.

MMXXV(A)

coral

dyslexias cycle

befallen delirious ludicrous

Time is ever a cycle. Whilst a piece of coral equals mere snapshot. Time is always a cycle as if no dyslexias exist. And perhaps no dyslexias exist if nature is nature and who is anybody to second-guess? What's a two-headed cat when identity is ever in flux? Well, the poet second-guesses because a poet can fall into this avocation that breeds the delirious as well as the ludicrous—some call them “angels.”

We accept what we do not know, even label them “angelic.” Delirious. Ludicrous. We have plummeted so low we cannot fathom that *this*, too, is simply cyclical. We have stopped breathing in our speed towards what sages consistently counsel to avoid in unending iterations of encyclopedias. We shall be stopped by that seductive reef known by natives as *The Grand Anonymous*—a luminous body, but for what? When one pink shard shall pierce a vital organ, shall our last thought be on its magnetic beauty? ~~Did we know enough to anticipate the serrated, sharp edges of desire?~~

MMXXVI(A)

frugal

thrifty merely

mayoralty mailers mulberries

Frugal with words, he will utter as his last word: "Mom..." Unsure at this stage whether the word will end with a period or a question mark. ~~Meanwhile, the mayor's staff is mailing out baskets of mulberries—the campaign season is equal to Christmas!—Hallelujah!~~ He recalls the indifference of shopkeepers to a hungry child skulking among their garbage bins. Given his experience equal to World War II deprivations, there is no logic to his behavior unfolding as the opposite of thrift. No, he wants filet mignon not spam. No, he wants more shoes than Imelda ever stole instead of saving for a college education.

A college education? Mere metaphor for future. He was trained to live in the present as that is all that he is guaranteed to have. He does not even have a past. If he did, he would acknowledge how adoption matters. He is so frugal he will live a life always adverbally by "merely"...

MMXXVI(B)

frugal

thrifty merely

mayoralty mailers mulberries

He is *different*. He knows broken laces are not a reason to buy new shoes. "I just need new laces." A prosthetic becomes his new right arm. Today he plays tennis, baseball, tag football ...

... he was not merely thrifty. His motivations were royal though birthed from *difference*. "Sweetie, it's okay," a new mother whispers. "~~We are all~~ I am different, too."

Later, watched lovingly by Mom, he spoons mulberries from generous cream, unaided, whole ...

... ~~Some breaks are merely hidden.~~ But the wabi sabi vase is not only more luminous, it is stronger once repaired. And its ruptures are not proudly but transparently presented to the world.

Many adoptive parents feel: *I didn't save a child. A child saved me*
...

MMXXVIII

moan

rape speedy

priest hedges behalf

Religion can be easy to judge. Was a continent raped? Did a mountain moan at what was witnessed from above? Did a father punch me? To such questions, did a priest hedge ... *speedily*? Only a poet can speak on my behalf and *that*, too, is a tragedy. You look at my body, therefore, you hedge your vision—one normally does that with elements like scars. The phrase “survivor’s guilt” is an oxymoron. Who truly survives experience? My missing limb was not necessary for me to have felt the blow, the cut, even the intensity of inexplicable hatred.

All points must be belabored to the orphan (just ask the adoptive parents) and the gifted among them must only add to their burden—my cousin Greg, Ph.D. in education, says strict parenting cannot work with most gifted children who must have freedom to learn the world on their own terms. Adoption experts always counsel adoptive parents to provide strict guidance to newly-adopted children, especially those coming from orphanages.

If it was not my choice to be birthed, whose was it? The priest, indeed, should have replied—speedily!—“God.” That he hedged only adds to sorrow. ~~Have I already mentioned the rising walls in the future against the cheeky rises of my desires?~~ One need not be gifted to know that human is animal but not vice versa. Unless a vice was first committed.

MMXXIX

benefit

chimed unison

dwindling startled analysis

They do not know to be startled when adoption is presented as a benefit. Perhaps decades later—if they survive the ensuing years—when they stumble on a mirror that reflects the ghosts of blood ancestors, they will utter ~~what they did not know to chime as children:~~ *This relationship begins with loss.* If they become poets, they might add, “*Redress*” is not synonymous with “*benefit*.”

Ensuing years—oh, poetry is so not worth the *dwindling* ...

MMXXX

By j/j hastain

humming

subtle petite

oath amenable deception

The reeds were frozen *into* it because the river was entirely frozen. There was a buzz that could be observed by many senses and this was noticed. The buzz left a yearning in the body of a boy. The boy wanted so desperately to lay in the river when all he could do was lay *on* it. He tried to explain this to his adoptive parent. Resting his scarred hand on the frozen river he attempted to indicate his ravenous appetite for *contact*: not only atop of, but the grope of within. "When I get what I need it is like rushes in my organs," he says, perhaps too young to even know how to state his feelings in so precise of a way but able to do so anyway. There are organs within desire: oat-like, fibrous, bran in the body. As this boy tries to indicate his body he feels bran in his glands.

Filial infanticide is not the same in regard to humans as it is in the more general sense with non-human animals. In human infanticide, there is often a preferential delineation made between biological sexes. This one will be killed but that one will not. Patriarchal culture is what causes that preference. Patriarchal acculturation is not natural to a spectrum that could ever be shared between humans and animals. A Hanuman Langurs eliminates the infants of the species because they represent what (in the group or clan) existed before it did; what in the memory of the other monkeys would remain a threat to the Hanuman Langurs' reign or embodiment as the group's new core.

If an adoptive parent can be a mode for emancipation perhaps a father and a mother can both treat their adopted child by way of sincere and matriarchal methods.

Do the nipples of the female members of the Hanuman Langurs group fizz and spittle while their young are being eliminated before their own eyes? Do they ever reach out a thick hand to help in the elimination and secretly do so for the sake of making the little, necessary deaths of their offspring less painful for their offspring (and therefore for themselves)?

MMXXXI

By Tom Beckett

forbearance

objective partiality

partisanship slander scrimmage

Either orphans can or can't, will or won't be found. Foundlings are chords or sometimes grace notes. ~~Listen: at the scene of the rhyme, in the tangled fullness of the skein of time, there are ones lying to and with one another.~~ Either orphans can or can't, will or won't be found. Foundlings are chords or sometimes grace notes.

MMXXXII

By Patrick James Dunagan and Ava Koohbor

prohibit

conception tolerate

aback abroad abash

lilt amnesia lit bed morning. "I would choose to be anonymous. Who cares who wrote it?" (Harry Partch) Do you think Partch was a good lover? All hands, no doubt. Double the instinct wooden blinds scene of streets I cannot see to breathe... serenade of dreams interrupted by sirenade of streets, fuck Masonic! eee eee scree all through the day. Wooden blinds see witness the street of San Francisco at her feet. Ey baba neighborhood rushes appearing all within, round, about. I cannot see to breathe. Pavement thick as anything, dense with thought. As nobody sees tears of a fish but for ocean so spilling around cars, top of trees awash with sharks—Corso's Italian vision of cities a-swarm with sharks. Heads of Society sometimes fart, sometimes shit, and sometimes refuse pass Gun Control! Foolish pride strips the city of charms. "Man listen to that! I wish I could play that good... everybody puts in his own personal style, of course. If he doesn't, then he just ain't a musician." (Eubie Blake) All this bullshit coming out from both above and below solidly coating civilization all over can't hide whiff of the hint of flooded corridors surrounding. Sacrifice is not the same as killing you've got the rituals all wrong. Evolution done fucked you up, kid. No longer kid, ain't no joke. No more than cloud is cloud. Having been up in the shit. ~~Suddenly one's dreams slide off~~, or so they say, Reality hitting the streets in the heat circling, another satellite in orbit. Bit by bit, another body, another alphabet by alphabet lost among cycles of continents rubbing up 'gainst each other, 'gainst any and all comers. Bunch of words: center, union, selflessness. Give me a bunch of flowers, they'll at least last the week. Taste that smell, how it bowls me over. Blast me another, sick ocean throws up dead fish dumped sewage from every myoclonic jerk. Only thing makes you free of fear is fear. Dive in.

MMXXXIII

By John Bloomberg-Rissman

Haybun of Orphans

abate
heuristic Cole
coil abhor acme accrued

aardvark aardwolf aaron aback abacus abaft abalone abandon
abandoned abandonment abandons abase abased abasement
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aplomb apnea apnoea apocalypse apocalyptic apocryphal apogee
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autoimmune automat automata automate automated automates
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automaton automats automobile automorphism automorphisms
automotive autonomic autonomous autonomously autonomy
autopilot autopsies autopsy autosuggestion autumn autumnal
autumns auxiliaries auxiliary avail availabilities availability available
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avantgarde avarice avaricious avariciousness ave avenge avenged
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azimuth azimuthal azores aztec aztecs azure baa baaing baal
babas babble babbled babbler babblers babbles babbling babe
babel babes babies baboon baboons baby babyface babyhood
babying babyish babylon babysit babysitter babysitters babysitting
baccarat bacchus bach bachelor bachelors bacilli bacillus back
backache

Without their sentences these words are orphans. Cole is my
youngest grandson's middle name.

MMXXXIV

By Jean Vengua

Tisket Tasket

cackle

hen ivy

origins necrology microcopies

Through the speakers her voice croons, *a tisket a tasket I lost my yellow basket*. Sunlight passes and waves from outside. A necrology walks in, says hello. *Are you together? Caramel macchiato, please. It be spring now*. He cackles, a chicken in the rough, an orphan in the nest. *Elvis, Elvis Presley...I'm all shook up* and soon forgotten. The cupcakes are frosted pink, white, and green, *too soon, too soon...love is a spark, lost in the dark...* Is this prose, or just a pose? Is the hen lost in the ivy? Cakes under glass await loving eyes, foreground a yellow wall and a line of bottled syrups: red, orange, lemony, red, blood, cane sugar clear. Choices, choices. The barrista pours micro-copies of Italian sugar sops. In the corner, the roaster grinds exotic beans.

MMXXXV

thus

portico colonnade

column merchant bargain

...thus I zoomed to your birthland where we just discovered your sister with the same flesh and bruised past. I had promised you our family's expanse would never know the ruler's edge. But there was no bargaining, no forum for my "white savior complex."

There was a portico. There was a colonnade. There was her pride more ancient than the most marble of columns. She stood at an edge but she stood as straight as a flagpole. She stood and waved her own created flag—as resplendent as her cherry lipstick.

I crept back to where I began this journey, a merchant unable to calculate where profit and loss are impossible to quantify.

~~Nonetheless, in the margins, there was a tiny scribble of the word "relief" whose existence measured quite clearly my smallness.~~

MMXXXVI

By Michael Leong

nomadic

tribe savage

intricate complex thesis

We were born into a dowerless present, heirs of uninhibited civic-spiritedness. On occasions an electric brightness would shoot out over the radioactive wastes of the earthly cytty in traceable lines assembled by an analogous but discontinued destiny. The wild and pharmaceutical path merged with a popular replacement image, which awkwardly isolated the rise in echoed incense from original asylum. ~~Manufacturers charred the captured mesh of crying isolates.~~ In the western soulcase, research will be delayed. Distributing fuel, we know so little of flight. Like the category of “chance,” the thesis of oure enteric minds was cut from the very top of an impossible page.

MMXXXVII

By Thomas Fink

bully

sawing sophomore

wreck guilty wrist

Two nations divisible. Puberty's injustices. Feral. The wreck had been spawned in self-dyspepsia. Invisible to us. A witness saw compulsion at work. She could sever it from a notion of pleasure. Swift enough, officers save the compulsive bull from graver guilt. Will the other matriculate into a career of wrestling sophomoric curiosities?

MMXXXVIII

By Aileen Ibardaloza

exploit

wage recourse

stamina anguish blithe

He chose to define “exploit” as a “heroic feat.” Akin to “building islands,” and keeping parts of his rice farm flooded, so migratory birds can have a place to “feed and breed”—much like rest stops, which he knew about. The same way he knew about seasonal movements, as he was once a migrant worker, itinerant, and dependent on periods of harvest and rest.

He has come to understand, however, that “exploit” can also mean ~~abuse~~ misuse. For the sake of argument, there it is, in the form of garnished wages and recourse loans. Or the liquidation of assets gained over time (except those listed in Schedule C, such as ~~residence situated on a farm owned and operated by the farmer at the time of retirement~~; cash on hand, say, \$37; savings account, \$263; checking account, \$154; household goods, \$2,000; pictures etc, \$50; clothing, \$330; and pension, for the sake of simplicity, unknown). Consider the anguish brought on by death contracts and broken benches (etymologically, mortgages and bankruptcies). Consider the required stamina.

Nevertheless, he still chooses to define “exploit” as a “heroic feat.” The same way he chooses to think of providing a safe haven for migratory birds an act of “adoption.” Until they are able to traverse the flyway—some to Alaska, in the spring, and others, to Patagonia, in the fall. He thinks there is something redeeming in this, that is to say, the placing of someone else’s best interests before one’s own. So he welcomes them each year, once in the spring, and once in the fall. Precocial creatures—short-billed, long-billed, black-necked, strikingly blue-winged—seemingly free and blithe. Consider such feat, such effortless flight.

MMXXXIX

By William Allegrezza

the handles we use—handles as pine limbs swing out into the
season sold through with signs that are distributed, though
disjointed, among the daffodils.

congenial

deficient desolate

dejection despondency disgruntled

MMXL

By William Allegrezza

disillusion

exuberant gratification

avid brusque concise

enough for a telling, a version of memory tuned to a time,
date, that is no more—a looking to place when place has eroded
or has been mowed for a new vision without anyone being
told inside. i do not now even know how to describe when
it all became lost, but it is no more, and my voice is tired
of replaying the details.

MMXLI

By William Allegrezza

demean

despicable emulate

evoke excruciating inaugurate

yes, you remember the hands behind pushing, the feel of the wall,
the taste of dust and fear, up against time, up against the moment
when you knew, just knew, you were about to unbecome before
living—

with a face contorted, with lines dissipating.

even in the here, years later,
the feelings return in moments of shame to shame,
and the miles that we have run disappear before
the light opening in the doorway.

MMXLII

By William Allegrezza

pour

pseudonym rebuff

resilient turbulent abrasion

i have been hiding behind the words, shifting them
on the table in front of you to reconstruct the lie, and
if you asked for the truth, i could only hand you a pile
of stories and tell you to search. as it is, you do not
ask, and i fall into the deception as easily as into any
story. and i toss the hulls into the pile as we continue
to talk.

MMXLIII

clad

rubbing corroborate

cursory dehydrate derive

Press paper against a street etching. Rub graphite against the paper. ~~Your fingers feel the grit but ...~~ What does the rubbing corroborate? Is not the souvenir of pain mere derivative of the authentic? Entonces, let us not be cursory. The parched will tell you, *Avoid cladding us with words.*

MMXLIV

By Sheila Murphy

electrify

endeavor gingerly

grimace gruesome inventory

Lane change lifts infection from the source, dilutes a coded pique.
Thus, shifts the frown, instills this day to come and stay, apart from
fences that deflect a new way and hold tight to this right-sided
roadway. A diminuendo of the venting, narrowly endured. I hear a
voice report that she remained a child of the community, the many
homes. A match to flower into pretty fire, thus loved no matter what.
Now wanted brightly as new snow.

MMXLV

By Michael Caylo-Baradi

Around The Merry-Go-Round

simulate

succumb surmise

anonymous anthology conjecture

Laughter bouncing in your little steps has expanded the backyard. Green grass is not redundant anymore, and now has a way of flattening raised punctuations. You run into our arms, and lose ourselves in your expectations. Your eyes surpass how we imagine innocence to be, how it veils dissonance couples refuse to recognize. Potted rhododendrons below the kitchen window now refuse to recede in songs from another decade. Even petals of bougainvilleas seem to hear your giggles and flutter like wings unable to fly. Intransigence around the dining table now dissipates in your tears, or in words from us that clutter like something broken on the floor, soaking in spilled milk.

The tips of your toes, fingers, and tears devise notions of fragility that hush nights in sleepy rhymes. We become fables we read to you, the furry cloak of kings, smoothness of paper monsters, sharpness of cackling godmothers, or the solemn glitter of impossibilities on vast icy oceans. We don't want you to slay dragons, or rescue lost princesses unprotected. We're still in the season of coronation, of indoctrinations, of immersions sturdy as inflatable boats we paddle for you on the shallow end of the pool. Questions could ripple you to unknown shores without us, waters that fill footprints unable to submerge.

MMXLVI

By Michael Caylo-Baradi

Omissions from a Memoir ~~that might be recycled in a novel~~

disposition

encompass extricate

generation guile imperative

(from Chapter 5: Eyes) Mirrors in this house cannot ~~forgive~~ console. They want to reduce an image to its origins, to bone structures, facial features, gestures. They imagine maps, shores avoided in conversations, and elevate ~~relegate~~ me into fiction from other continents.

(from Chapter 8: Rituals) So I'm not the summation of my parents' eyes and nose, or their sense of the inevitable in weekends before an altar. Their proximity is contract. Their welcome frames my constitutions. Origin is the intimacy of our prayers before meals, the echo of amens.

(from Chapter 10: Configurations) Smiles in a photograph hold absence, omissions. I restore phantoms in portraits, sneaky as breezes that levitate curtains and thoughts. They punctuate. They inspect my fictions, before pushing me to rest in fluid routines: the scrambled eggs, the traffic jams, ~~the look at the taco stand~~, late dinners, all sinking in unwashed dishes.

MMXLVII

By Michael Caylo-Baradi

Quenching Lucio Vampire

instill

impart craftiness

sly install insight

I let nights uncurl from the silence of leaves, where critters disperse sonic semaphores to perfect the night. The slope of necks levitates expectations in the hollow of half-lit moons. I thirst for language that jet from punctured solitudes, their history, memory, fragilities. I breathe, ~~sneak myself in~~ in their dreams, for the taste of rehashed melancholies. I search not victims, but to liberate those entombed in phantoms unable to simulate flight, escape, transcendence. As always, obstructed lineage purifies blood from the past.

On a future bio-pic, the shore must glimmer like overused cliché, the kind that twinkles in my eye, and the moral proclivities of my molars. I am driving debonair in Prada sunglasses, holding its speedometer in laughter that accelerates the wind. I feel my jaws crucified in a long wait, impatient as innocence. A close-up shot on a cliff illuminates waves in my eyes, nothing tidal, or ceremonial. A wide lens would reveal lovers recycling a narrative before defamations. They could be notes in a score compressed in silhouette. Notice how the alphabets in the closing credits dilute as color that stretches horizons on your lips.

MMXLVIII

incite

arouse abet

wrest clad foreboding

Impossible to arouse forebodings when everything forebodes. Incite, then wrest? Impossible to arouse forebodings when everything forebodes. Like, he is clad in grayed rags ~~and that means ...~~

P.S. This theory is a first-world problem.

MMXLIX

generate

modify pivot prevalent

recur spontaneous abhor

Generate an orphan where a sentence is incomplete. Generate an orphan by editing the second line to delete “prevalent,” a word slipped though to disrupt the purity of the hay(na)ku tercet form. These are moments generated by the imperfection of words. But “imperfection of words” is an oxymoron, just like “spontaneous abhor.” Does not *Abhorrence* always erupt spontaneously? *Well, no*, a human orphan with wide-open eyes materializes to reply. *Have you seen the movies produced on orphans? Not when they point out that orphans are incomplete. But that orphans complete their identities by becoming serial killers. And never with a bullet as that would be too clean. Say, a knife. —Better yet, a hatchet!* The reader who is actually writing the narrative with questions pauses, then wonders out loud, *Are we digressing?* The orphan sniffs before ~~it~~ she dematerializes. An echo returns to the reader’s room: *Only death can provide completion and the grammatical period is not synonymous with death.*

A QUINTET FOR MICHAEL GERARD TYSON

(for Julio Olguin)

As an earnest young man, an orphan, [Mike] Tyson was preoccupied with origins and authenticity. Unlike Muhammad Ali, the young Tyson never staked any claims to radical American individualism. He didn't boast of being "the greatest ever." Even late in his career, after his crack-up, when his once-great skills had been replaced by threats to eat his opponent's children, Tyson tellingly qualified his boasts: "I'm the best ever! There's never been anyone as ruthless," he said but then felt compelled to add, "I'm *Sonny Liston*! I'm *Jack Dempsey*!" He recognized his place in the hierarchy of tradition: an excellent copyist, not an original. At best, a perfect imitation. As he later put it, in an interview with the *New York Times*, he was resigned to be "a fake somebody" rather than "real nobody." To Tyson, the prospect of becoming a "real somebody" was never a possibility.

—from "*Tyson Projected*" by Avi Steinberg, n + 1, 29 June 2011

MMXXIII

hanker

hirsute pirouette

pyrites priest stock

Who becomes your non-pyrite priest? Mike Tyson who bulldogs his face under your chin, hidden fists *crossing hooking* the core that protects your spine, never mind the *jab* no need for feelers just punching a hairline away from knuckles breaking? Or would it be Muhammad Ali dropping both protective fists to his side to expose his face to everything the universe hankers to throw at those who proclaim *I am the best!?* Buy stock in the one who uses his face to hide threats? Or the one who exposes his face from supreme self-confidence, nay, *extreme delight!?* If you have felt the fist of your own blood, you have uncontrollably pirouetted into the answer clued by yet another question: Tyson or Ali: who was the Orphan?

As for Beauty? For the definition of “adoptable” is inextricably linked to what caused a thousand warships to flare across an ocean. As for beauty? ~~Ask for beauty. Ass for beauty.~~ Tyson or Ali—is any bet more AAA-rated than not taking stock in who was not an Orphan?

And never drop your strong hand's fist, lowering the barrier to expose your face unless you contain the genetics of a million warships, ever ready to slice water, ever ready to bludgeon air.

MMXXIV

alkali

alacrity lace

irrigates bound harbor

He chose one of nature's most fragile creatures—the bird—for his lace harbor. ~~A “brute” cannot acknowledge lace directly.~~ With alacrity, he kisses his pigeons one at a time, each time a tiny heart beating against his extremely competent thumb. Salt stains his kisses as he has never felt Muhammad Ali's self-confidence. ~~Among wise poets, it is known: to feel is to know.~~ When he proclaims, “I'm the best ever!” he denies the “I” and lapses to calling himself “Sonny Liston” and “Jack Dempsey.” As with most other orphans, his diction lacks alacrity.

His tattoos—they begin to hide his face. No surprise, especially with his true voice as high-pitched as a middle school Valley Girl's. Not that people listen to him. They only tell him where and how to cross his fists. Even his adoptive “father” once begrudged the time required for his GED education. Even as he became more powerful than any elephant in the room, he followed orders before returning to a harbor painstakingly crafted with feathered creatures who'd learned to cherish his caresses. ~~Meanwhile, isn't it so easy to be you!~~

They called him “The Baddest Man on the Planet”, ~~unthinkingly layering further the redefinition of “orphan” into “bad.”~~ Let us release a more bountiful irrigation that would transcend the betrayal of his early years. Let us start calling him his true name: Michael Gerard Tyson.

MMXXV(B)

coral

dyslexias cycle

befallen delirious ludicrous

“Genderqueer” is identity not bowed by normative definitions of “man” and “woman.” *But Normal is just a button in my washing machine!* How can a baby be born and not be a child? When loosened from its reef, a fragment of coral is still ... coral? Mike Tyson said he'd cheated on every single one of his women—the dyslexic cycle of one betrayed by she whose canal felled him onto a world greedy for his worst. ~~But what do we know, truly, about his mother? (I first typed “other.”)~~ Once, his boxing trainer poked a gun into his ear after he accosted a girl whose blood the trainer shared. “Never,” the trainer insisted, “Never harm my family.” She is my coral and you are a bumbling hammerhead shark. Mike Tyson: not entirely ludicrous. For he would mature enough to observe: “Women today? They love me for my glossy furniture. And furs.”

Furs. Yes, never forget the mink, the sable ... Beauty pronounced only after the animals are gutted so that what once was coral turns into the most ludicrous green color shared by money and mold. Color, as ever, is an inevitable narrative.

MMXXVII

mealier

milliampere slouch

enameling *comedy of art* turbe

In the beginning there were no orphans. God created the sky and the earth to serve everyone a bounty of meals. The earth was empty and had no form. No slouch, God made the earth full—*replete!*—containing all forms. Darkness covered the ocean, enameling even what fluctuates into a basis for ... *Something*, a basis solid enough to support the footsteps of both man and God and woman and trans, which is to say, also the ever-faltering steps of orphans, ~~even when the latter were biased against recognizing—~~ “His” existence.

When God’s spirit began to move across the water, all pre-creatures anticipated the between-ness of algebra. There would be art. There would be comedy. There would be bathos. There would be turbulence. There would be the boxer whose stare I first typed, ~~“star”~~ would speed across a thousand yards until the knock-out would occur before the very beginning of that first jab. ~~In boxing, the jab is not the goal but the set up: the “pre” before the “face.”~~

In the beginning there were no orphans and yet their existence was pre-ordained. With the orphan’s mix of loss and desire, only then could the next sentence regarding Genesis surface: *Then God said, “Let there be light.”* As has been whispered within all indigenous cultures: *Light requires cracks through which to slip through.* What history teaches: occasionally, *Light doth sunders...*

MML

CODA

wide

shrink affable

amiss despondent dejection

“Fight or flight syndrome”: The most common feeling the boxer will experience leading up to a fight—it is the brain telling you to run away to survive or stay and fight. It would rather you don't face the fear because survival is its main aim and there is more chance of this if you don't hang around. Adrenalin is released into the blood stream, getting you ready for action (this makes you stronger). ~~You will sometimes feel sick and need to go to the toilet. You will get the shivers and sometimes stutter. Another name for this is FEAR.~~

“Eustress”: A type of stress that has a positive effect. The boxer will actually seek stressful situations and thrive on the feelings associated with them—they will get “fight or flight” but boxers use it to their advantage.

thin

expand angry

targeted joyful *Joyful*

SELECTED NOTES TO POEMS

MMXXIV

Bibliography: "Tyson Projected" by Avi Steinberg, *n + 1*, 29 June 2011 (<http://nplusonemag.com/tyson-projected>)

MMXXXIII

Note from John Bloomberg-Rissman:

The source for the haybun text is http://www.cse.msu.edu/~cse231/PracticeOfComputingUsingPython/06_Dictionaries/SpellCheck/ref.txt. Download Dept. of Computer Science and Engineering (Michigan State University, Spell-Check dictionary).

How I chose the source: I took all the words Eileen's son was supposed to learn (or whatever he was supposed to do with them) and put them through a google search to see what might be made of them and all that came up were word lists ... and then it came to me that all of those isolated words are orphans in their way, that we (words and people) all derive our meaning and significance from our ecosystems/contexts etc etc.

MMXXXVI

Note from Michael Leong:

The haybun was derived only from language found either in the hay (na)ku provided or in definitions and quotations in the *Oxford English Dictionary* entry "orphan, *n.* and *adj.*"

MML

Bibliography: "Boxing Psychology" by Jamie Wadman, *Art of Boxing*
(<http://boxingkent00.tripod.com/id4.html>)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As ever, thanks to Jukka-Pekka Kervinen whose artistry makes him the ideal Poet's Publisher.

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The Bakery: A Literary Journal, editor Albert Abonado and guest-editor Barbara Jane Reyes

The Brooklyn Rail, poetry editor Anselm Berrigan

Greetings #15, editor Jeffrey Joe Nelson

Marsh Hawk Press Review, editor Thomas Fink

On Barcelona, editor Halvard Johnson

Otoliths, editor Mark Young

Peep/ShowA Taxonomic Exercise in Textual and Visual Seriality...., editors Anne Gorrick and Lynn Behrendt

Special Gratitude to the poets—William Allegrezza, Tom Beckett, John Bloomberg-Rissman, Michael Caylo-Baradi, Patrick James Dunagan and Ava Koohbor, Thomas Fink, j/j hastain, Aileen Ibarraloza, Michael Leong, Sheila Murphy, and Jean Vengua—who accepted my invitation to create a haybun involving one of my son's hay(na)ku (as part of my exploration of the poetic authorial persona) and to Mark Young for publishing these poems together on *Otolith*. While these poems are now integrated within the larger book, they first appeared as a haybun folio at *Otoliths*, about which Richard Lopez presented the following review which is also convenient for describing the folio project (*Really Bad Movies* blog, July 5, 2013):

eileen tabios ... curated a very fine portfolio of haybun [hay (na)ku married to prose] entitled *147 million orphans* published in mark young's excellent journal *otoliths*. the title refers to the estimated number of orphan children living in the world. the idea was to tap a few poets to engage with a school assignment, a list of 900 english words to be learned within a school year by tabios' adopted son.

the results are to this reader dazzling. tho tabios asks each poet to stick within the theme of orphans she allows for the flexibility required in order to make good writing. john bloomberg-rissman compels a very long list of words, the prose portion of his haybun, to be orphans without a sentence. while on the other hand, a collaboration between patrick james dunagan and ava koohbor, expands the theme to create a jazzy syncopation of urban wilderness. both are astonishing performances.

moving along to tom beckett's contribution is a tour de force of economy. his orphans refuse to be one thing or multiple things. they are guitar chords and sometimes grace notes.

while sheila murphy writes of a single child. better is the music of the words murphy uses. they literally bounce on the tongue.

electrify
endeavor gingerly
grimace gruesome inventory

this hay[na]ku is, i think, part of the 900 word list. these are polysyllabic words with lots of vowels. they crash into utterance.

furthermore, jean vengua's piece is a tear thru the childhood song, *tisket tasket*. vengua fuses two words in her hay [na]ku that is surreal, comic and full of horror, *hen ivy*. those two words go so well together i think they can be a title for a book.

these are a few of the gems found within this folio. nine bows to eileen tabios for making it happen.

Thanks as well to my boxing trainer Julio Olguin for much philosophical discussion as regards boxing and enabling my body to experience the theory.

Last but not least, much love to Michael who is so good in English he even writes poems. Thank you for sharing your words. If it needs to be said, this book is about 147 million orphans, not you who is a beloved son.

ALSO BY EILEEN R. TABIOS

POETRY

After The Egyptians Determined The Shape of the World is a Circle, 1996
Beyond Life Sentences, 1998
The Empty Flagpole (CD with guest artist Mei-mei Berssenbrugge), 2000
Ecstatic Mutations, 2001 (with short stories and essays)
Reproductions of The Empty Flagpole, 2002
Enheduanna in the 21st Century, 2002
There, Where the Pages Would End, 2003
Menage a Trois With the 21st Century, 2004
Crucial Bliss Epilogues, 2004
The Estrus Gaze(s), 2005
POST BLING BLING, 2005
I Take Thee, English, For My Beloved, 2005
The Secret Lives of Punctuations, Vol. I, 2006
Dredging for Atlantis, 2006
It's Curtains, 2006
SILENCES: The Autobiography of Loss, 2007
The Singer and Others: Flamenco Hay(na)ku, 2007
The Light Sang As It Left Your Eyes: Our Autobiography, 2007
NOTA BENE EISWEIN, 2009
Footnotes to Algebra: Uncollected Poems 1995-2009, 2009
Roman Holiday, 2010
THE THORN ROSARY: Selected Prose Poems and New 1998-2010, 2010
the relational elations of ORPHANED ALGEBRA (with j/j hastain), 2012
THE AWAKENING: A Long Poem Triptych & A Poetics Fragment, 2013
SUN STIGMATAS (Sculpture Poems), 2014

FICTION

Behind The Blue Canvas, 2004
SILK EGG: Collected Novels 2009-2009, 2011

PROSE COLLECTIONS

Black Lightning, 1998 (poetry essays/interviews)
My Romance, 2002 (art essays with poems)
The Blind Chatelaine's Keys, 2008 (biography with haybun)



Eileen Tabios (born 1960) is an award-winning Filipino-American poet, fiction writer, conceptual/visual artist, editor, anthologist, critic, and publisher.

While no one really knows the number of orphans worldwide, a common estimate is 147 million. These children represent one of the greatest humanitarian tragedies of our time even as their plight fails to receive as much attention as natural disasters or wars.

147 MILLION ORPHANS: MMXI-MML is the first book-length haybun poetry collection. A "haybun" is a combination of hay(na)ku and other text. The hay(na)ku is a 21st century diasporic poetic form; its core is a tercet-based stanza with the first line being one word, the second line being two words, and the third line being three words.

Front Cover Image: Cribs for orphaned babies at an orphanage in Colombia (photograph by Eileen R. Tabios)

Back Cover Drawing of Author: "Mom" (2014) by Michael Pollock

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